



**Sheila Dixon**

*Mayor,  
Baltimore*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Baltimore City Health Department Proposes Fire Safety Standards for Cigarettes**

Baltimore, MD (October 10, 2007) – Responding to a new study showing that cigarettes sold in Baltimore are substantially more likely to ignite fires than cigarettes sold in New York, the Baltimore City Health Department is proposing a regulation to reduce fatalities from fires.

At the request of the Baltimore City Health Department, the Harvard School of Public Health tested five brands of cigarettes purchased in Baltimore City: This study found that nearly 100% of the cigarettes sold in Baltimore pose a significant fire risk. By comparison, similar testing has found that cigarettes sold in New York are much less likely to ignite a fire.

To address the public health hazard of cigarette-caused fires, the proposed regulation would require that cigarettes sold in Baltimore meet fire safety standards that already exist in other states. These cigarettes have a reduced propensity to burn when left unattended and are currently required in such large markets as New York and California.

The proposal was announced by Mayor Sheila Dixon, Fire Chief William Goodwin, and Health Commissioner Joshua M. Sharfstein on the 1900 block of Cecil Avenue. At this location, on May 22, 2007, a cigarette caused a fire, which led to deaths of 8 people, including 5 children.

“We learned a devastating lesson on May 22, 2007,” said Mayor Dixon. “All we’re asking is to have access to the same products in Baltimore that are sold in other areas of the country.”

Dr. Sharfstein stated, “Cigarettes that meet the fire safety standard are not safe. But they are less likely to cause a catastrophic fire.”

According to the Baltimore City Fire Department, since 2000, over 500 fires in Baltimore, Maryland have been related to smoking.

“Over the last 6 years, cigarette-induced fires have resulted in the deaths of 49 people in our city,” said Chief Goodwin. “This is a common-sense approach to saving lives, and the Baltimore City Fire Department stands with the Mayor and Health Commissioner in supporting this proposed regulation.”

“With this proposal, Baltimore recognizes the devastating impact of cigarette-caused fires and the ease with which that impact can be reduced by requiring cigarettes to meet the fire safety standard,” said Professor Kathleen Dacheille, Director of the Center for Tobacco Regulation at the University of Maryland School of Law.

The state of Maryland passed a fire safety standard for cigarettes that will begin to take effect on July 1, 2008, with full implementation expected within approximately six months. The effect of the city’s proposed regulation, if implemented, would be to advance the implementation of this important legislation.

The Health Department is soliciting comments on the proposed regulation, which can be found on the Health Department’s website at <http://www.baltimorehealth.org>. Please send comments electronically to [bchd@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:bchd@baltimorecity.gov) or via mail to Baltimore City Health Department, 210 Guilford Avenue, Baltimore MD 21209 Attention: Rianna Brown.

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